

I oppose Normandy tower up-zoning

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City Clerk Agenda

To: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>; Paden, Liza <lpaden@cambridgema.gov>;

Cc: Lopez, Donna <dlopez@cambridgema.gov>;

Clerk Lopez please enter into the county record and Ms. Paden please fwd to the planning board.

Hi Dear Cambridge City Councilors,

Please do not allow any up-zoning for the Normandy properties project. I do not believe in up-zoning for anything in Cambridge; especially, in the already densely populated Central Square neighborhood (or the border with Kendall Sq. which seems to be where most of these up-zoned proposals have come from.)

In these few years that Cambridge has been considering major development (with most of the bulk being considered for Central and Kendall Sqs.), and having engaged studies to see the effect that this would have on the communities affected (K2/C2 et al) it still seems that no real urban planning is being done. It seems that Cambridge residents can have no faith that good work is being done in good faith because now it seems that every plan is being allowed with very little resistance. It is fairly obvious that if every landlord took their maximum under current zoning laws that this would be a nightmare for the people who live in these neighborhoods; forget about actually considering up-zoning.

When my husband Ethan and I bought our house on Essex St. in 1991 we were ecstatic. Both of us grew up in the upper west side of Manhattan before it gentrified and became a place that only rich people could afford to live in. When we went to college things changed in our old neighborhood- we hoped that these terrible changes would never happen in Cambridge and they did when rent control went away. When we moved into our neighborhood we were struck by how much more diverse it was class-wise, ethnicity-wise than the upper-west side even pre-gentrification. We loved hearing so many different languages spoken outside of our home. Our first Christmas-time in our neighborhood we actually experienced Passados (something like) a Mexican leading up to Christmas ritual that we read about in our UNICEF calendar (that we had gotten right on our block when UNICEF

was there.); a ritual where friends and family go door-to-door knocking on peoples houses re-enacting Joseph looking for a place for Mary to give birth and then each night there is a pre-planned house to go to to eat and fete and laugh and play music. The many friends and family of all ages came down the block singing and playing hand-held percussion instruments

I want my Cambridge back. I don't want real estate and development to be ruling this town. If we had kept rent control none of this would have happened and yes, we all would have survived and we would have been able to have ordinary people: artists, teachers, trash collectors, policemen, et all to be able to live in our neighborhoods as they once did and largely do no longer.

Not only does creating more housing not create affordable housing (supply and demand has no place in the current bizarre situation: there are certain places that people want to live in this country and that is that) and inclusionary zoning is not good enough.

Also, this "wealth" in Cambridge is based on a very volatile thing: people taking out huge loans, low-interest ones but still ones that if people lose their job the banks will foreclose on them. Absurdly high property prices and low-interest loans that the banks are giving away with a ridiculous paycheck to mortgage rate ratio does not breed stability and obviously, it does not create diverse, vibrant neighborhoods.

A few years ago I read that Cambridge has more million dollar homes per capita than any other city or town in America. This means that Cambridge has more million dollar homes per capita than Greenwich, Connecticut!

Also, per quality of life it really gets up my craw that concerning the 10 Essex St. project that is not going to have adequate parking spaces for its tenants; that a member of the planning board who voted with the majority of the board to give them a special permit and not have adequate parking said " this is probably going to end up being a huge problem for the residents of this neighborhood."

I feel like we are living in a version of "The Emperor has no clothes"; we seem to have people on the Cambridge City Council, the planning board, the zoning board and the City Manager who are so overwhelmed by all the businesses and wealthy people who want to work and live in Cambridge that they feel that we can somehow be a green city and just pretend that we have adequate public transit, pretend that our roads have the space for cars (many of them SUVs), bicycles, pedestrians; that we can pretend that all this building is to make Cambridge more affordable; that we can pretend that we are better off now than we were when rent control existed; that we can pretend that people (who work for real estate and development and for hi-tech

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companies) really care about the quality of life of people who live here.

Everybody should read or re-read Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s "Player Piano" ; Cambridge (at least Central and Kendall Sqs.) is in danger of becoming Ilium a technocrats dream come true. (His prophetic book was written in 1952.)

Please don't let this happen and a great way to try not to do more harm is not to allow any up-zoning.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Allison Aaron Cascio,
36 Essex St.